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B1

Olympia Dukakis given Pell Award

Awards also go to actor
Bob Colonna, blues
guitarist Duke Robillard
and Misha Djuric, head of
Festival Ballet Providence.

BY CHANNING GRAY
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Former Trinity Rep creative head Richard Jenkins last night had some advice for his successor, Curt Columbus, the theater's new artistic leader.

"Curt," he said, "they love you when you leave."

Jenkins, who has a successful career in film, was on hand at the Lederer Theater to bestow the Pell Award for lifetime achievement on his friend and colleague, Oscar winner Olympia Dukakis.

This was the 11th year for the annual honor that singles out local and national talent for contributions to the arts.

Jenkins, who directed Dukakis in a couple of productions at Trinity in the early 1990s, told a gathering of about 500 arts lovers in Trinity's upstairs theater that Dukakis was a great actress because she never "closed herself off to what lay ahead."

"She always lived in freedom on stage, and that freedom she demanded of herself made her a great actress."

Dukakis, 75, was one of four recipients of the annual Pell Awards, named for former Sen. Claiborne Pell for his work in establishing the National Endowment for the Arts. Pell, who is in frail health, sat in a wheelchair in the front row of the theater accepting praise from speakers and honorees alike.

Dukakis told of growing up in the tough ethnic neighborhood of Lowell, Mass., where she had her own knife when she was 11.

"I didn't use it," she said, "but I brandished it."

She said Greeks are ambivalent about being honored. When she got the Academy Award for *Moonstruck*, her mother said, "Now don't get a big head."

This year, Trinity decided to do things a little differently when it came to the Pell Awards. For the past decade, the ceremo-

SEE AWARDS, B4

Awards

Continued from Page B1

nies have been held at the Rhode Island Convention Center.

But Columbus wanted to bring the awards back to the theater, he said. So the awards ceremony was held first at the Chace Theater, then patrons regrouped in a tent behind the Pell Chace Theater, on Empire Street, for cocktails and dinner.

"We wanted a better awards show," said Columbus before the show, "and we wanted a better party."

The event was projected to net about \$100,000, said Rich Jaffe, head of marketing and fundraising for the theater. That figure tops last year, he said.

Besides Dukakis, who flew in from Los Angeles, where she is shooting a film with Shirley MacLaine, the theater honored actor Bob Colonna, once a member of the Trinity company, blues guitarist Duke Robillard and Misha Djuric, head of Fes-

tival Ballet Providence.

"I'm a little thrown, a little stunned," said Colonna before walking out on stage. His son Joe gave him the award, saying beforehand that "Colonnas do good work but don't know how to accept praise."

Robillard, the award-winning bluesman who grew up in Burrillville, told how he decided to become a guitarist when he was 6, much to the chagrin of his mother. She wanted him to become an accountant.

He said that when he travels the world over to perform, he is often introduced as being from Boston.

"But I correct them and tell them I'm from Rhode Island," he said, "and that I'm proud of it."

Djuric said that no one person can accomplish what he has alone, and he thanked his staff and dancers.

Also on hand was Providence Mayor David N. Cicilline, who said the four recipients have "enriched our lives immeasurably."

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